

A Sketch of the Life of Dr. J. W. Hirst



At the age of eight he was soprano soloist in a boys choir till his voice changed to a tenor.



At twenty-one he was making up his mind to go to Princeton



Practicing Medicine in Philadelphia

The "Sunshine City", Florida
311 - 8" Avenue North
December 20, 1952

Dear Relatives and Friends,
Both Near and Far:

1952 has been a most eventful year for the House of Hirst.

On April 28", at the close of a very beautiful day, just at sunset, our good Dr. Hirst was released from the bonds of weakness and suffering. What a wonderful awakening for the Spirit that has been imprisoned in so frail a body, now freed and restored to vigor again! He went to be with the Great Physician, Whose he was and Whom he served.

Dr. Hirst first saw the light of day on March 30, 1864, in Fall River, Mass. His parents were consecrated Christians, active in church work.

At the age of eight he was soprano soloist in a boys choir, till his voice changed to a tenor.

He was fun-loving as any normal boy. Growing up on the seashore he became a great swimmer, good in water sports in summer, and skating and ice hockey in winter.

He went to prep. school at Williston Academy, East Hampton, Mass. At class reunions he had great fun in reminiscing. He was a great athlete. In his first year at Princeton he was captain of the football team. He also won the Hurdle Trophy.

Being short of funds and long on ambition, he began a bookstore, buying used books from the upper classmen and reselling them to the lower classmen for a profit. In this way he graduated with the Class of '90 debt free.

While at Princeton he formed a lifelong friendship with Robert E. Speer and became a Student Volunteer for Foreign Missions. Anxious to be a medical missionary, he entered Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia. The study of medicine being expensive, by the time he had finished this course he was in debt. He was anxious to wipe out this debt before entering active missionary service. He opened an office in Philadelphia, and did teaching at Jefferson; and to be more efficient he went down to Baltimore and took six months Post Graduate work with Dr. Howard Kelley.

In 1904 he wrote his old friend, Robert E. Speer, now Secretary of Foreign Missions for the Presbyterian Board, that he was ready for appointment. Mr. Speer wrote back, "You are the very man we are looking for to help Dr. O. R. Avison launch a medical college in Seoul, Korea."

His friends in Philadelphia tell how they tried to persuade him not to give up such a lucrative practice as he had built up. He turned his back on this to follow the Great Physician.

In Seoul, Korea, he found Dr. O. R. Avison had seven young Korean men helping him in Clinic work. They wanted to be doctors. They started

from scratch. Dr. Avison took four in a class of Materia Medica, while Dr. Hirst took three in a class of Anatomy. They had to coin words and write their books as they went along. When each class had worked up ten pages of material it was mimeographed and each student in both groups got a copy of both subjects.

This was the very beginning of the Union Medical College in Seoul. Later it was enlarged and financed by Mr. L. H. Severance of Cleveland, Ohio. It became known as Severance Union Medical College.

One of the first things Dr. Hirst did on arrival in Seoul was to get the Avison boys, Gordon and Douglas, to bring their Korean playmates to the Gatehouse on Sunday mornings. He taught them Christian songs and told them Bible stories, the Avison boys acting as interpreters. This little Sunday School grew and grew. Dr. led the singing and acted as superintendent. He helped to make this one of the large city churches.

These two Avison boys on completing their education in the U. S. A. returned to Korea as missionaries. The Orient was accepting occidental medicine in some places, and Seoul was one.

Dr. Hirst was appointed one of two physicians to the Emperor his first year in Seoul. The Korean Court was very strict as to formalities. Each time Dr. Hirst was called to the palace he had to put on his dress suit, even when called early in the morning—top hat, ascot tie, cutaway coat, striped trousers, spats, gold-headed cane, and all. The Emperor did things in the grand manner! He presented the two American doctors, each with a three-man rickshaw, and passes to be presented at the palace gate.

Because the women of the Orient then lived in strict seclusion, especially the high-class women of the palace, it was very difficult for the doctor to make a diagnosis without even seeing the patient! After much deliberation a curtain was finally hung in front of the lady, she then slipped her hand under the curtain and the poor doctor could then at least take the patient's pulse.

In 1907 Dr. Hirst and Miss Sadiebelle Harbaugh were married. She and her maid of honor, Miss Cordelia Erwin, rode to the church in true Korean style—Korean Bridal Chairs draped with multicolored silk curtains around all four sides, and a big tiger skin over the top.

Using Korean architecture Dr. Hirst built a beautiful home for his family. It became one of the show places of Seoul. Visiting tourists were always interested. When Ewha Woman's College began their Home Economics Department the teacher brought the class over each year for inspection and study.

Dr. Avison and Dr. Hirst worked ceaselessly at getting the medical center established and going. They wanted a college, a hospital and a nurses' training school. The motto of the school was "ADVANCE". The aim of the school, to give to Korean young men the best that the medical profession has to offer, and to provide a means of perpetuating it under truly Christian auspices.

In 1907 the time came for Dr. Avison to go on furlough. They had worked and planned so well Dr. Hirst was able to carry on, and the first class of seven were graduated. Their only regret was that Dr. Avison was absent.

Year after year more and more young men came from the mission schools wanting to study medicine. So the school grew and grew. When Mr. L. H. Severance of Cleveland, Ohio, visited Korea he was impressed by what had been accomplished and by the tremendous opportunity. So much so, he made generous contributions from time to time. Soon it was decided to give the institution his name.

In 1927, after a long and lingering illness, dear Sadiebelle was called to her Heavenly home, leaving J. Marianne and Richard in school in the U.S.A., and Donald in school in the Orient.

The Dr. buried himself in the work of the Medical School and Hospital, training the internes and nurses, and the Outpatient Department. In the summer rainy season, in winter's snows, day or night, any time a call came he was quick to respond.

In 1929 Dr. Hirst married Sadiebelle's best friend, Miss Cordelia Erwin. We kept open house for the medical students and nurses and encouraged them to come to visit us and discuss their problems with us.

Dr. Hirst did a great deal of operating, lecturing all the while, giving minute details. He required the students to take notice. At any time, without notice, these notebooks were collected and examined to ascertain if the students were getting the course. One student, after he was warned three times for not doing his work, Dr. reported him at faculty meeting and recommended he be expelled. Then the boy haunted our house, imploring me to get Dr. Hirst to reinstate him. Dr. said, "You tell him the practice of medicine is a matter of life and death. I'll never pass a student who is not a credit to Medicine." "But", he implored, "My parents are poor. They have borrowed money for me to study medicine. I'm ashamed to go back home, What am I to do?" I advised, "You can get a job now and come back after one year and take up the course where you dropped out, work hard, and graduate." He did just this!

Dr. Hirst had two young Korean assistants. Number one was "big Dr. Kim" the best after dinner speaker I ever heard. This in English not his mother tongue.

Number two was "little Dr. Kim". He had the prettiest hands I ever saw. "The cleverist" Dr. Hirst corrected. With brush and water colors he could illustrate in color each step in an operation.

Dr. Hirst also said: "He can do a Caesarean section just as good as I can." He was so young he looked like a High School student.

Missionaries may retire at 65; they must at 70. Dr. Hirst was 70 on March 30, 1934. The medical course was now a four years course, with forty ambitious students admitted by examination each year, a student body of 160 men, staffed by 32 well trained doctors. The hospital was very well equipped, as hospitals go in the Orient. The Nurses' Training School was thorough. For the most part the student nurses came from the high school graduates of mission school, with four American nurses and two Korean nurses trained in the U. S. A. as teachers.

The nearer the time came for our departure, the heavier were our hearts. We had taken root in this our adopted country, among such lovable people.

What to do with the accumulation of 30 years? Dr. gave his library to the school. He had a lot of nice books. The piano, purchased with the wedding gift of money from His majesty, the Emperor, we gave to the Korean nurses' home.

With examinations and farewell parties, commencement and presents from grateful patients, we were quite overwhelmed.

352 young Korean men had graduated in medicine. 152 nurses had been trained, and Severance Union Medical College and Hospital was a beehive of activity. Dr. Hirst was very happy and very loath to leave. For thirty years we had lived among them and had received only courtesy and kindness. Is it any wonder when we sailed away we left our hearts behind us in dear little Korea?

But our younger son, Donald, had not yet completed his education. Now a pre-med student at Duke University, Durham, N. C. There was always something doing at Duke—lectures, concerts, discussions. Dr. and Mrs. Elbert Russell included us in their circle of friends. Dr. Hirst audited courses in economics and sociology with Dr. Elwood. Cordelia took courses in religious drama and play production. President Few and his good wife included us in many social functions, where we met many interesting people. So we managed to pass the seven years at Duke. Donald completed his medical course at Duke in 1941.

We got a new station wagon, took the two seats out of the rear, and put a standard size mattress there, and with a lunch basket we lived there while we gypsied over the United States. We visited Cordelia's ancestral home in Kentucky. When Dr.

saw Old South Pleasant Grove Church, with its beautiful cemetery so well kept, he exclaimed, "Why, this is the place for us to be buried!" At different times we had discussed the End of Our Open Road. The above seemed to be the answer.

We visited relatives and friends, going as far northwest as Lake Louise in the Canadian Rockies. We had four months in California. We spent the winter in Old Mexico, going as far west as Guadalajara. After two years of wandering we arrived in St. Petersburg, Florida, with a letter of introduction to Mrs. George Cooper, that missionary to missionaries.

This "Sunshine City" is for the benefit of oldsters. The Three-Quarter Century Club with its chorus has provided Dr. with special pleasure. He sang all his long and useful life. Quite naturally Our Open Road came to Journey's End at 311 - 8th Ave. N.

These Sunset Days have been quiet. The war in our beloved Korea has brought heartache.

We have had time to make our adjustments. Dr. said many times, "For the sake of the living the dead should be cremated." He sang up until the last two weeks before he went away to join the Heavenly Choir.

Old South Pleasant Grove Church Memorial Service
August 17, 1952

Jeremiah 45: 5a "Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not."

Renunciation

Matt. 6:33: "Seek ye first the Kingdom of Heaven."

Concentration

Mark 8:35: "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it."

Consecration

This memorial service was just what I wanted, a great comfort to me. It seemed so fitting and appropriate.

I refuse to grieve. It is given to but few women to have the love and comradeship of a grand good man like Dr. Hirst. I plan to carry on just as he would have me do. I have turned 311 - 8th Ave. N. into a Guest House, and wait "till one clear call for me."

May the Gladness of Christmas, which is Hope,
the Spirit of Christmas, which is Peace,
and the Heart of Christmas, which is Love,

Abide with You and Yours.

Cordelia.



The first graduating class of the Medical College, 1907.
Dr. O. R. Avison was absent on furlough.



Graduating class of 1934 and some of the faculty.

Foreign Missions and Overseas Interchurch Service

The Board of Foreign Missions
of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America

156 Fifth Avenue, New York 10, N. Y.

April 29, 1952

To Members of the Korea Mission

Dear Friends:

This is to share with you a telegram which was sent to us from St. Petersburg Florida on April 29, 1952 by K. Hirst, as follows:

"DR. HIRST DIED 7:10 LAST EVENING 28th."

Jesse W. Hirst, M.D. will be remembered by the members of the Korea Mission for his long period of service in Korea, particularly in connection with the Severance Union Hospital in Seoul. He served from 1904 until his retirement on March 30, 1934. He was 88 on his last birthday.

I am sure that you join with us in extending deepest sympathy to Mrs. Hirst and to his two sons and a daughter who survive him. Mrs. Hirst may be addressed at 311 Eighth Avenue North, St. Petersburg, Florida.

We would give thanks to God for this life of faithful and effective service.

Sincerely yours,

J.L. Hooper
Acting Secretary

*Dr. Chas. A. Clark writes to Mrs. Hirst
"--- the gift of memorabilia ---
'Sympathy' has been defined
as you pain in my heart";
it is so at this time."*

Foreign Missions and Overseas Interchurch Service

The Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America

156 Fifth Avenue, New York 10, N. Y.

Jesse Watson Hirst, M.D.

Memorial Minute

Adopted by the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions

May 19, 1952

The Board made record of the death of St. Petersburg, Florida, on April 28, 1952 of Jesse Watson Hirst, M.D., retired missionary from the Korea Mission, at the age of 88.

Dr. Hirst was born in Fall River, Massachusetts, in March 30, 1864 and was graduated from Princeton University in 1890 and from Jefferson Medical College, Philadelphia, Pa., in 1893. He was appointed and assigned by the Board to Korea on March 7, 1904, and sailed on August 18th of that year.

Dr. Hirst was married in Korea on March 11, 1907 to Miss Sadie B. Harbaugh, a missionary of the Southern Methodist Board in Korea. Mrs. Hirst passed away on February 19, 1928. On November 26, 1929 he was married to Miss Cordelia Erwin, also of the Southern Methodist Board, who survives him.

During his entire thirty years in Korea, Dr. Hirst was connected with the Severance Hospital and Medical School. These years cover the period of internal growth and enlarged service of Severance. His annual personal reports make clear this growth and also Dr. Hirst's own ideals of service, both for himself and the institution. In his last report in 1934, Dr. Hirst wrote:

"In a report presented to the station four months after my arrival, I find this reference to the missionary gatherings that were held in Seoul that fall. 'I shall always be thankful that I was able to spend my first days among such a body of devoted men and women.' A later reference reads, 'In the mean time I was becoming acquainted with Dr. Avison and Severance Hospital. My first service there took the form of pipe-fitting, joiner work, and general tinkering as well as carrying on the regular out-patient service. The tinkering and pipe-fitting were part of the final touches necessary to prepare the then new hospital for its approaching dedication.'

This statement is also found: 'October 4th, the day after Annual Meeting closed, found us in the midst of our delayed operative work. That day saw the fine new operating room used for the first time. Moreover the first operation was the removal of a cataract -- Letting in the Light.'

Again in 1933 Dr. Hirst in a reminiscent mood spoke of the many changes which had come to the country during these years, including the introduction of Christianity. He had the following comments on the progress of Severance and the extent of "indigenization" which had been attained, even before the day of the use of the word by Boards:

"In the field of my endeavor, and the institution where I work, the progressive development has been as marked as in any of the fields cited above. When I joined its staff, Severance was in the class now known as a 'One-Man Hospital.' Its budding Medical School too was in a similar condition. For seven years it moved along as a "two-man institution." Then came a third, a fourth, a fifth, and so on until we boasted 11 foreign members. In the meantime selected graduates and other nationals were joined to the teaching group. Their number in time equaled ours, then passed it, and so today holds the lead, outnumbering us nearly three to one."

Dr. Hirst was the head of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology. Writing of this in 1928, he spoke of majors and minors in every one's work, the major being that which "because of its far-reaching influence, may justly take precedence." By this standard, he states:

"The energies absorbed by my teaching seem to me to be of major importance. Year by year a new group of men appears before me in the classroom or in the operating room. No one knows the limited or unlimited possibilities bound up in their futures. In my case, there is allowed one year in which to influence each group. All that I can reasonably hope to teach them must be done in that year. All they may ever know of the subjects handled by me may depend upon what I can give them during those few months. Their future life work is therefore very intimately connected with what transpires in my classroom!

Year by year, we watch the growing body of alumni and love to think of the sum total of the precious services they are permitted to render to the ever-widening circle of their several constituencies. It is an inspiring theme!"

While Dr. Hirst would have refused to make a sharp distinction between evangelistic work and medical work, he recognized a special opportunity was his to engage in the more direct church work. In this same report of 1934 mentioned above, he stated:

"Another excerpt from that earliest report says, 'I have joined the boys of our South Gate Compound in the conduct of a Korean S.S. held each Sunday morning. The average attendance has been 18 and we confidently expect to establish a good school in the near future.' Thus began what we know now as the South Gate Presbyterian Church with a fully organized session, a congregation of 300, and several daughter churches."

Dr. Hirst greatly endeared himself to his colleagues in the service. Dr. O.R. Avison wrote an article for "The Korea Mission Field" in which he pointed out that Dr. Hirst had taken part in 1908 in the "graduation of the first class of doctors", and had been on the job through the years up to 1934, when a class of 31 graduates brought the total number of alumni up to 356. Dr. Avison also paid this tribute to Dr. Hirst.

"Now at the end of 30 years of cooperative effort I can testify that we have worked together throughout all those years without even one serious break between us, and I think you will agree with me that this fact is the strongest tribute that can be given to Dr. Hirst's fairness, forbearance and Christian charity."

Surviving Dr. Hirst are his widow, Mrs. Cordelia Erwin Hirst of St. Petersburg; a daughter, Mrs. Lynn Boyd Rankin of Amarillo, Texas; two sons, Richard Hirst of Washington, D.C., and Donald V. Hirst of Council Bluffs, Iowa, and a brother, Eben P. Hirst of Fair Haven, Massachusetts.

The Board would join these relatives and the many friends in this country and Korea in honoring the memory of this servant of the Master, and with them would draw courage for the rugged days ahead, as together we build again on the foundations that he and others have laid.

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Surviving Dr. Hirst are his widow, Mrs. Cordelia Erwin Hirst of St. Petersburg; a daughter, Mrs. Lynn Boyd Rankin of Amarillo, Texas; two sons, Richard Hirst of Washington, D.C., and Donald V. Hirst of Council Bluffs, Iowa, and a brother, Eben P. Hirst of Fair Haven, Massachusetts.

The Board would join these relatives and the many friends in this country and Korea in honoring the memory of this servant of the Master, and with them would draw courage for the rugged days ahead, as together we build again on the foundations that he and others have laid.

OBITUARIES

Dr. Jesse Hirst Dies; Physician To Emperor

Dr. Jesse Watson Hirst, who served in Korea for 30 years as a Presbyterian medical missionary, died last night in a local hospital. He was 88 and resided at 311 Eighth Avenue North.

During the last years of the Korean Empire in the early 1900's he served as court physician to the Emperor. He later helped and organize the first medical college nurses training school and general hospital in Korea which was located at Seoul.



Dr. Hirst helped train 352 Korean doctors who were trained from DR. HIRST American textbooks which he helped translate directly into the Korean language. He retired in 1934 and returned to the United States.

Following a seven-year residency in Durham, N. C., Dr. Hirst spent over a year touring the United States and Mexico. During this tour he visited relatives and friends, and lectured on Korea.

Born in Fall River, Mass., Dr. Hirst received his early education at various schools in Massachusetts, graduating from Williston Preparatory School in 1886. He later entered Princeton where he received his AB degree in 1890. His medical education was completed at Jefferson Medical College, Philadelphia.

Surviving are his wife, Mrs. Cordelia Erwin Hirst, St. Petersburg; a daughter, Mrs. Lynn Boyd Rankin, Amarillo, Tex.; two sons, Richard W. Hirst, Washington, D. C., Dr. Donald V. Hirst, Council Bluffs, Ia., now in this city; and one brother, Eben P. Hirst, Fairhaven, Mass.

Arrangements will be announced by Baynard's.

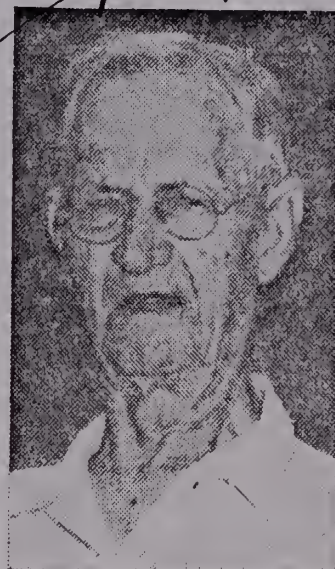
Funeral Services

HIRST - Funeral Services for Dr. Jesse Watson Hirst will be conducted in Baynard's Chapel, Wednesday, April 30 at 2 p. m. with Dr. Alton H. Glasure officiating. Interment later. Survivors are his wife Mrs. Cordelia Erwin Hirst, this city; daughter, Mrs. Lynn Boyd Rankin, Amarillo, Tex.; two sons, Richard W. Hirst, Washington, D.C.; Dr. Donald V. Hirst, Council Bluff, Ia., now in this city; brother, Eben P. Hirst, Fairhaven, Mass. Dr. Hirst, age 88, passed away in a local hospital, Monday night, April 28th. He was a Presbyterian Medical Missionary in Korea 30 years, a native of Fall River, Mass., graduate of Williston Preparatory School, Princeton and Jefferson Medical College, of Philadelphia. He resided here at 311 Eighth Avenue North.

*Dr. Glasure said of Dr. Hirst:
"Great modesty, often times
great ability"*

St Petersburg Evening Independent

Dr. J. W. Hirst, 88, Passes In Hospital



DR. JESSE W. HIRST

Dr. Jesse Watson Hirst, 88, former court physician to the Emperor Yi of Korea, died last night in a St. Petersburg hospital.

Dr. Hirst was a Presbyterian medical missionary in Korea for 30 years. He was court physician during the last years of the Korean empire, in the early 1900s.

He helped organize the first medical college, the first nurses' training school, and the first general hospital in Korea. Among his first medical students were 352 Korean doctors, whom he trained from American textbooks, translated directly into the Korean language. Dr. Hirst assisted in the translation of the texts.

He spent many years in Chomon, Korea, north of the 38th parallel. For many years, he was personal physician to Dr. Ree, head of the embattled South Koreans.

After his retirement in 1934, and his return to the United States, he made his home in Durham, N. C. for seven years. Later, he toured the United States and Mexico for more than a year, visiting friends and relatives, and lecturing on Korea.

He came to St. Petersburg nine

years ago, and made his home at 311 Eighth avenue north.

Dr. Hirst, a native of Fall River, Mass., was graduated from Williston Preparatory school in Massachusetts in 1886. He was graduated with an AB degree from Princeton in 1890, and later attended Jefferson Medical school in Philadelphia.

Surviving Dr. Hirst are his wife, Mrs. Cordelia Erwin Hirst, St. Petersburg; a daughter, Mrs. Lynn Boyd Rankin, Amarillo, Tex.; two sons, Richard W. Hirst, Washington, D. C., and Dr. Donald V. Hirst, Council Bluffs, Ia., now in St. Petersburg; and a brother, Eben P. Hirst, Fairhaven, Mass.

Baynard's is in charge.

Funeral Notices

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